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UNCLAS MUSCAT 000291

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STATE FOR NEA/ARPI, OES/SAT, IO/T  
COMMERCE FOR NOAA/NWS  
ENERGY FOR LLNL/NAKANISHI  
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SUBJECT: TSUNAMI FEARS FOCUS OF FORUM

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SUMMARY  
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1. USG scientists raised seismic awareness and delivered the keynote address on establishing a tsunami warning system for the Indian Ocean basin during the third annual Gulf Seismic Forum in Muscat. The real threat of tsunami-generating seismic activity between the Omani and Pakistani coasts was the central issue of concern. End Summary.

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RAISING SEISMIC AWARENESS  
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2. At the third annual Gulf Seismic Forum, hosted in Muscat by Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) from February 19-23, seismologists from the region and the U.S. reviewed the threat of an Indian Ocean tsunami, and steps needed to diminish its impact. The seismologists highlighted real concerns over the potential impact of earthquakes off Pakistan's Makran coast and southern Iran on Oman and the neighboring emirates of Sharjah and Dubai. (Note: A 1945 quake in this region generated a tsunami that killed 4000 persons. End note.) Forum participants discussed the possibility of establishing a GCC disaster center to handle such emergencies.

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TSUNAMI WARNING SYSTEM ON TAP

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3. U.S. NOAA scientist Laura Kong, Director of the UNESCO-sponsored, Hawaii-based International Tsunami Information Center, updated attendees on the development of an Indian Ocean tsunami warning system, expected to be operational by mid-2006. Kong remarked that awareness is crucial to the system's success, citing a recent survey revealing that nations closer to the 2004 Sumatra epicenter had far greater tsunami awareness than those in the Middle East and Africa.

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U.S. EFFORT BEARS FRUIT  
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4. Based on a relationship established in earnest in 2003, SQU officials worked closely with Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory scientists in preparing for this productive forum. Organizers were pleased with greater regional interest in seismology, evidenced by new participants from the Saudi Arabia Geological Survey, Dubai Municipality, and Egypt. BALTIMORE